



Sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies – the path towards transformation

*Together 2030 written inputs to the
UN High-Level Political Forum on
Sustainable Development (HLPF)
2018*

From policy to action

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The diverse challenges and interlinked uncertainties of globalization and climate change demand societies to become more and more flexible to withstand crises, reinventing themselves in resilient, integrated, sustainable, multi-dimensional and inclusive ways. The United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development recognizes the importance of transforming societies through sustainable, resilient and inclusive paths, encompassed by the interlinked and universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A broader concept of systemic resilience must be developed that recognizes the interconnectedness, volatility, uncertainty and complexity of challenges. This concept must address the challenges in a sustainable and inclusive way, as both solution and a preventative approach to new crises. This means making the concept of ‘leaving no one behind’ a reality and bringing the poorest and most marginalized to participate fully in society.

Resilient, sustainable and inclusive societies demand a shift beyond transactional approaches to development towards a collective perspective of joint social capital values such as mutual trust, solidarity, helpfulness and friendliness that strengthen the international cooperation. Countries must cooperate to address the systemic and overlapping inequalities in wealth distribution, gender, income, disability, age and indigeneity or ethnicity, among others.

Fostering resilience requires a holistic and integrated approach to the SDGs, catalyzing progress across the three pillars of sustainable development, addressing, for instance, climate change and protecting the environment and services it provides, the livelihood and structural challenges of changing demographics and technologies and realizing human rights and protections to all. National and local governments should adopt a human-rights based approach to implementing the SDGs, in particular, with respect to those under review this year at the HLPF, focusing on: the rights to water and sanitation; the right to an adequate standard of living; including access to modern energy services; and the right to adequate housing, the right to the city, and the right to a healthy environment.

Building a safer, healthier and more resilient future for people, animals and nature demands for us to rethink the way we produce, distribute and consume energy, food, water and how we protect our common goods.



Addressing Inequalities and promoting transformation, a few examples:

- Good vision enables individuals and families to pull themselves out of poverty, helps people to go back to work or school, and to overcome the inequality, marginalization and exclusion that blindness and vision loss often perpetuate.
- The national Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) processes are potential “readiness platforms” for SDG7 implementation, that can be strengthened through the adoption of inclusive, multi-stakeholder approaches. Where there is no functioning SE4ALL process, support for organizing alternative ongoing multi-stakeholder dialogues on SDG7 implementation is crucial. However, the SEforAll process offers interesting lessons for CSO participation in SDG7 and wider SDG processes. A 2014 review by CAFOD, Hivos, IIED and Practical Action of the civil society experience with SE4All in six countries, highlighted that while a strong demand for CSO participation exists, opportunities to participate, and benefit the process, remain highly constrained in many countries. What is needed:
 - Targeted support for multi-stakeholder processes to develop SDG7 implementation plans, building on existing SE4All processes where appropriate
 - Support for CSOs at the national level to be able to participate (eg consultations at local levels, invitations to events, provision of timely information)
 - Inclusion of CSOs in international discussions around SDG7 implementation
 - National level SDGs planning and implementation need to include more CSO organizations through open calls for better reach to citizens.

The theme of the 2018 HLPF is an invitation to go beyond the identification of challenges and threats and towards discussing concrete, collective and funded action that could move societies to be more sustainable, inclusive and resilient.

Meaningful participation, VNRs and the HLPF

The Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are a core component of the follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda. It is critical that the HLPF continues to lead on the tracking the SDGs progress, encouraging and facilitating multi-stakeholders dialogue and strengthening commitment and implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Whilst a number of countries have already presented their VNRs at the HLPF, we are concerned to see that some of the 2016 and 2017 reports focused only on a limited set of SDGs. Member States agreed, as part of the 2030 Agenda, that review of the SDGs should respect “their universal, integrated and interrelated nature and the three dimensions of sustainable development” (para 74). Accordingly, VNRs should reflect on the implementation of all goals and their interlinkages. The thematic reviews of a small set of SDGs, undertaken during the first segment of the HLPF, should not dictate or minimize the scope of the VNRs.



Additionally, the current set of global indicators focus very much on GDP as a measurement tool and do not develop further measures of progress beyond GDP, posing additional challenges for reporting countries to properly present and discuss implementation progress. Additionally, the majority of countries addressing poverty and crises in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda do not influence the global distribution of public goods. The annual flow of ODA (currently at around USD 15 billion per year) is over-shadowed by the estimated USD 11 trillion that OECD countries cash in sovereign debt.

Moreover, Voluntary National Reviews are not simple country snapshots, and definitely not a substitute for national processes. Instead, they should be viewed as opportunities to build national and sub-national dialogues and mechanisms on implementation in each country and offer a learning space among all stakeholders.

There is a groundswell of activity when countries commit to preparing a Voluntary National Review and engage with the HLPF, but this energy does not translate to domestic implementation and is often siloed within Government Department's responsible for foreign policy and engagement with multilateral institutions within the UN ecosystem.

Stakeholder engagement in the VNR process should be encouraged before, during and after the HLPF. At the national level, civil society is already pushing their governments to establish inclusive and participatory processes, including through the establishment of national CSO coalitions. Civil society is engaged from an advocacy perspective, lobbying for governments to establish concrete national SDG implementation plans and appropriate governance mechanisms. However, there are limited opportunities for civil society to participate in a meaningful and ongoing way and a general lack of transparency about how and what policy frameworks are being developed to respond to the SDGs.

United Nations entities, especially in developing countries, have a strategic role to play in building bridges between civil society, stakeholders and the government, facilitating dialogue and inclusive processes of national accountability. Non-material social goods should also be incorporated within VNR analyses; these include trust and solidarity that can only happen if citizens' meaningful participation is a reality at all levels.

We recognize the effort to coordinate the participation of major groups and other stakeholders (MGoS) in the VNR sessions at the HLPF. We strongly recommend the allocation of additional time for MGoS interventions, especially from national CSO platforms and alliances from reporting countries, to allow for more inclusive and participatory engagement, to better listen to the experience of the poorest, most marginalized and disadvantaged from VNR countries, and for engagement in more meaningful exchanges with Member States. We also recommend the introduction of a segment to the HLPF program where stakeholders are able to reflect and provide feedback on the VNRs presented by their countries and share their own contributions to the SDGs implementation. In line with this, we would welcome a move for VNRs to be presented in parallel sessions, in different meeting rooms, allowing more time for deeper analysis and discussions, including with civil society and stakeholders.



CSO participation at VNR processes in 2018, a few examples:

- **Ghana:** CSOs in Ghana are well engaged by government in the chain of planning implementation and review. For instance, the government, through the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) supported the establishment of a National CSO Platform on SDGs which is made up of one platform for each of the 17 goals and this platform is constantly consulted for inputs for a roadmap to localize the SDGs in Ghana. CSOs are currently being considered for an observer status on the High Level Ministerial Steering Committee chaired by the president of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo.
- **Australia:** The Government of Australia will be presenting its first voluntary national review at the 2018 HLPF. To prepare the VNR, an inter-departmental committee was established to coordinate inputs from across different government departments and consultations with stakeholders. However, there is no commitment or obligation to extend this process beyond the development and launch of the VNR and no long-term institutional framework or national implementation plan in relation to the SDGs. There is a risk that the VNR process encourages a façade of activity and accountability – masking inaction and a lack of national ownership or policy implementation at the domestic level.

Specific Action recommendations regarding SDGs under review:

<p>Goal 6. <i>Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</i></p>	<p>Governments and donors must fight water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) inequality with urgent action on finance, integration and sustainability.</p> <p>1. Finance: For every US\$1 spent on water and sanitation, an average of \$4 is returned in economic benefits. Yet the WASH sector is chronically underfunded in many developing countries. More than 80% of countries report insufficient financing to meet their national targets. Targets 6.1 and 6.2 require a tripling of capital financing to \$114 billion a year, with operating and maintenance costs in addition. Financing gaps in national WASH plans must be closed through taxes, tariffs and transfers. There must be an increase in official development assistance to WASH, and support provided to climate-vulnerable countries to access climate finance for WASH. Better finance also requires governments to increase data availability and transparency, to improve policy-making, use of resources and accountability to their people.</p>
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	<p>2. Integration: Effective integration between ministries, sectors and stakeholders is crucial to achieving SDG 6, and the whole 2030 Agenda; success of many other SDGs relies on the achievement of WASH targets. For example, achieving Goal 6 is fundamental to ending malnutrition (Goal 2), and to ending preventable newborn and child deaths (Goal 3). And without universal access to WASH, Goal 10 on reducing inequalities will not be reached. Similarly, Goal 6 will not be achieved by focusing only on WASH. Cross-ministerial and multi-stakeholder processes must be built between WASH and intersecting thematic areas. There must also be integration across policies and programs and WASH must be embedded in plans.</p> <p>3. Sustainability: Threats to services include insufficient financing, limited capacities, poor governance, climate variability, climate change, ecosystem degradation, behavior change challenges and growing demand for water resources. Ensuring these complex, shifting and multi-dimensional issues do not compromise WASH services requires integration and a holistic, system-wide approach that involves local communities at every stage. Services must be adapted and made resilient. Sustainable, climate-resilient services must be delivered with a focus on creating lasting behavior change. There must be improved planning, monitoring, accountability and adaptive management, involving rights-holders throughout.</p> <p>Improve access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities to support prevention and control of neglected tropical diseases, including blinding trachoma, through targeted ODA funding for WASH programs. This also contributes to achievement of Goal 3, in particular Target 3.3 and Target 3.9. States should reaffirm the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation as essential for the enjoyment of the right to life as well as all other human rights.</p>
<p>Goal 7. <i>Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</i></p>	<p>Recent research by Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) quantifies for the first time the ‘energy access dividend’ or the direct and indirect impact of access to modern electricity across a range of sustainable development goals (SDGs). The International Energy Agency (IEA) also made the case for increasing energy services for small- and micro-businesses, including smallholder agriculture, to boost inclusive economic development and lift people out of poverty. This development dividend can be delivered through faster, lower-cost</p>



deployment of decentralized rather than grid-based electricity. 84% of the 1.06 billion people globally without access to electricity live in rural areas and in most cases would be most easily and cost-effectively connected through decentralized renewable energy solutions (DRE). There are also considerable co-benefits for climate action from deploying these solutions – as well as the local environmental benefits, for instance reducing deforestation by shifting from cooking with polluting solid fuels to clean solutions (IEA 2017). This requires:

- Building on the capacity of CSOs to ensure that SDG 7 can act as an enabler to deliver on other development goals through a focus on nexus issues and gender equality and women’s empowerment;
- Improving decision-makers’ and other energy stakeholders’ understanding of the energy needs of the poor;
- Raising awareness of, and stimulate demand for, energy services and products that can improve the lives and livelihoods of the poor, in particular women and marginalized groups;
- Building public and political understanding and support for inclusive and renewable energy markets, the reforms needed to support them, and enable informed participation in energy decision-making;
- Working with other stakeholders such as private sector, donors, civil society and other development partners to design and deliver energy solutions with long-term development impact;
- Addressing the ‘investment gap’ for energy access;
- Adopting a holistic or ‘ecosystems’ approach to connecting last-mile communities, sometimes referred to as the ‘end users’ of a service;
- More joined-up decision-making at the central and local government level, working across line ministries (energy, health, agriculture) as well as more coherent donor support. Greater collaboration with a range of different stakeholders supporting the development of last-mile communities, including civil society and community-based organisations, can also help; and
- Energy services to be designed to meet the wider socio-economic needs of end users. They must pay more attention to socio-cultural factors – the habits, attitudes and customs of

	<p>end users, including gender issues – which can make or break an energy service.</p>
<p>Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Affirm the vision of cities for all, referring to the equal use and enjoyment of cities and human settlements, through legislation seeking to promote inclusivity and ensure that all inhabitants, without discrimination, are able to inhabit and co-create resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements. ● National and local governments should recognize the social and ecological function of land. ● Urban services should adhere to the human-rights obligations of States and respond to the needs of women, children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, local communities and other marginalized groups, and in this regard eliminate legal, institutional, socioeconomic and physical barriers. ● States should foster the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, ensuring security of tenure which guarantees legal protections against forced evictions, harassment and other threats, and promote inclusive slum upgrading and prevention strategies that go beyond physical and environmental improvements to ensure that slums and informal settlements are integrated into the social, cultural and economic dimensions of cities.
<p>Goal 12. <i>Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</i></p>	<p>All countries should commit to the national adoption of ISO 20400: Sustainable Procurement, including the ISO as an implementation tool for best practice foreign aid. ISO 20400, established in 2017, is the world’s first International Standard for sustainable procurement and enables countries and organizations to embrace sustainable procurement in their purchasing practices and policies. It is also the first ISO standard to be published in a specific format to provide accessibility for people with vision disability.</p> <p>National governments should support initiatives at the global level which seek to simplify & harmonise laws to help achieve Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) patterns worldwide. This includes existing initiatives such as ending cosmetics animal testing.</p>



Goal 15. *Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss*

- National and local governments should foster ecosystem-based solutions to ensure that the ecosystem's regenerative capacity is not exceeded and address the unprecedented threats arising from loss of biodiversity, pressure on ecosystems, pollution, natural and human-made disasters, and climate change and its related risks, understanding that these threats undermine the efforts to end poverty in all its forms and dimensions and to achieve sustainable development.
- States should affirm that the right to a safe, healthy and ecologically-balanced environment is a human right in itself.
- Research on sustainable utilization of biological resources should be promoted.
- Governments should develop and implement policies and regulatory frameworks that promote the generation and conservation of bio-diversity including marine ecosystems and reduce dependence on threatened species and ecosystems
- There is a need to develop capacities for the conservation of biodiversity including management of national parks, protected areas and forests
- Governments should develop systems and incentives to support public, private sector and community investment in reforestation and forest plantation development in degraded priority forest areas

About this paper:

This paper is issued on behalf of the Together 2030 Global Advocacy Working Group.

The process of drafting this collective paper was as follows:

- *A set of questions were proposed for collection of inputs from February 8 to 23 2018.*
- *The Together 2030 International Secretariat developed a first draft based on the inputs received.*
- *A first review was opened for comments and additional inputs from February 27 to March 10 2018, followed by another review/editing of the text.*
- *A second and final round of comments was opened to the Working Group from 15 March to 27 March 2018.*
- *The final edited version was submitted for the review of the Together 2030 Core Group (2-9 April). The document was, then, finalized by the co-chairs for submission.*

Countries must cooperate to address the systemic and overlapping inequalities in wealth distribution, gender, income, disability, age and indigeneity or ethnicity, among others

Organizations engaged on the Together 2030 Global Advocacy Working Group were invited to collaborate and provide inputs to this document. Final text reflects the summary and collection of those inputs but not necessarily, the agreement or endorsement of those organizations on all proposals presented.

Country examples were provided by members of the Initiative engaging with the implementation and accountability of the 2030 Agenda at the national level and reflect their respective experiences. They were summarized and edited by the Together 2030 International Secretariat.

A summary of this position paper has been included in the official discussion paper from major groups and other stakeholders to the HLPF 2017. The full text will also be published at the official HLPF 2017 website as a thematic paper.

Diversity of Opinion within civil society:

Members of Together 2030 express and prioritize different aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs and provide a broad range of views regarding its implementation and follow up. Members are united in the following objectives:

- *To strengthen partnerships between civil society and stakeholders to support the effective implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.*
- *To make the voices of people heard and have people holding governments accountable for the progress towards achieving Agenda 2030 and the SDGs at all levels.*



www.together2030.org
info@together2030.org
twitter.com/Together_2030